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An American Phenomenon

THE National Guard is an American phenomenon, unique in concept and unique, likewise, in its adaptability to American needs.

George Fielding Eliot, a shrewd and perceptive observer of the military scene, describes it as "a product of our National experience which is still adapting itself to the emerging requirements of today" in an article in this issue of "THE NATIONAL GUARDSMAN."

Mr. Eliot's article deserves careful reading by public officials, professional military officers, ordinary citizens, and by Guardsmen as well. In lucid, easy-to-understand language, the author views the Guard's dual affiliation, Federal and State, as at once its greatest virtue and its most frustrating problem.

Because the National Guard is different from other military Reserve Forces, it defies the neat and tidy categorization which military and Government leaders tend to favor. It is the chief reliance of the Army and Air Force when trained, backup units are needed, and the main emergency resource of State public safety and law enforcement officials when civilian forces are overwhelmed. Functioning in both areas, it frequently experiences difficulty in being fully understood by either.

Consequently, National Guardsmen seem constantly compelled to explain their organization, its dual role and its impressive array of capabilities. Frequently, the very men who should best understand its peculiar suitability for the two missions it performs—State and Federal officials and military planners—seem to understand it least. The Guard repeatedly must provide evidence that the National Guard system does indeed satisfy American needs better than any other system that could be devised.

Mr. Eliot's article, together with one in our April issue and its second part this month by Lt Col Bruce Jacobs, covering in detail the outstanding performance of Army National Guard units in Viet Nam, tell the story as Guardsmen themselves would like to have it told.

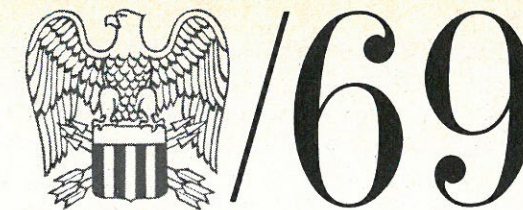
Active Army Commanders are impressed and "genuinely pleased" by the skill and cooperative attitude of Guard units which have come under their control in Viet Nam, reports Col Jacobs. The same high appraisal of Army and Air Guardsmen serving in the combat zone has come from too many sources to be doubted. Despite its heavy involvement in civil emergencies in recent years, the Guard nevertheless has managed to maintain a level of combat-readiness high enough to draw praise from the professionals who direct the combat efforts in Southeast Asia.

And in the unpleasant role for which it has drawn the widest public attention—control of civil disorders—it responded swiftly and effectively when the drastically-altered nature of the threat became apparent, in Detroit and Newark. New tactics were devised quickly to cope with the disorders, new approaches sought, and new and vigorous efforts made to keep the Guard in tune with the changing society around it.

"Only a military force imbued with a sense of responsibility both to the Nation and to their respective communities could have reacted so effectively," points out Mr. Eliot.

It is a matter of record, Mr. Eliot emphasizes, that the National Guard has fulfilled *both* of its mission requirements faithfully and effectively. In the process, it has demonstrated its present value and the continuing validity of the concept under which it exists and functions.

With understanding and support from the society it serves, it will continue to be uniquely American, uniquely suited to American needs, and uniquely effective in discharging its dual responsibility. ♦



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AN AMERICAN MILITARY INSTITUTION 2

Motivated by community ties as well as by National requirements, the National Guard receives a close "once-over" as an organization unique to the history and development of the United States.

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PART TWO

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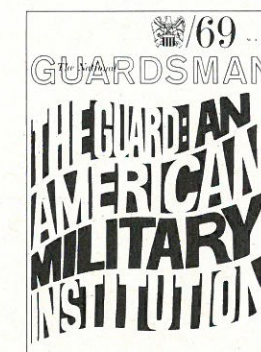
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The title of this month's feature article is symbolically embodied into the folds of the American Flag—the Flag which the National Guard has upheld by word and deed since this Nation's birth.

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